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The Things that make for Peace.

Delivered in a

SERMON

Preached before the Right Honourable

THE

Lord Mayor,

AND THE

Court of ALDERMEN,

AT

GUILD-HALL-CHAPPEL,

Upon the 23. of *August*, 1674.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. now Lord Arch-Bishop of *YORK*.

The Second Edition.

LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's Head* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, 1691.

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THE

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Court of ALDERMEN,

AT

GUILD-HALL-CHAPEL,

Upon the 17th of August, 1679.

TO THE

Right Honourable

Sir *WILLIAM HOOKER*,

Lord Mayor

OF

LONDON,

And to the

COURT of ALDERMEN.

Right Honourable,

THE following Discourse was never designed to go further than your own Chappel, *otherwise it had not been left so Imperfect: But since you have thought fit to Order it should be more Publick, it would ill become me, who*

do in it so earnestly press Obedience *to* Superiours, *to dispute your Commands. Such therefore as it is, I humbly present it to you, heartily wishing it may in some degree minister to the Promoting* Peace *and* Unity, *and* Brotherly Love *among us, which is the only thing therein aimed at, by*

Right Honourable,

Your most Humble and

Obedient Servant,

JOHN SHARPE.

Rom. xiv. 19.

Let us therefore follow after the things that make for Peace.

THE *Apoſtle*'s deſign in this *Chapter*, is to perſwade the *Roman* Chriſtians to live *Peaceably* one with another, notwithſtanding all their different *Perſwaſions* in matters of *Religion*.

He doth not ſo much ſet himſelf to *Reſolve* their *Controverſies*, to determine which *Side* held the Trueſt Opinions; as to *Silence* their *Diſputes*, to allay thoſe *Bitterneſſes* and *Animoſities* with which the ſeveral *Parties* proſecuted each other, to oblige them to *embrace* one another in Chriſtian *Charity*; and though there could not be an *Unity* of *Judgment* among them; (which certainly is a thing can never be expected; mens apprehenſions concerning things being neceſſarily almoſt as various as are their *Tempers* and *Complexions*;) yet nevertheleſs they ſhould ſo order the matter, that there might at leaſt be an *Unity* of *Affection*, and an amicable communication one with another.

He repreſents to them that they had nothing to do to *Judge* or *Cenſure* their *Brethren*; for they were *Ver. 4. & ſeq.* *God*'s Servants, and to *Him* only they ſtood or fell; that though they were *miſtaken* in their Notions as to the Points in Controverſie, yet nevertheleſs, if what was done upon thoſe *miſtaken* Principles, was done out of a pure heart, and as in obedience to the Commands of God, it would be accepted of him.

He

Ver. 13,14, 15. He is so far from countenancing their *Religious Quarrels*, that he adviseth even those that held the true side of the Question, to submit for *Peace* sake, and rather to *recede* from their *right*; to forbear doing that which they might lawfully do, than by undue use of their *Liberty* to cast a *Stumbling-block* before the weak uninstructed Dissenters, and be a means of their forsaking Christianity.

Ver. 17. And the more to enforce this Discourse he assures them, that however they might pretend *Religion* for their present differences, yet in truth, *That* was of all other things the least interessed in them. They were much mistaken in the nature of it, if they took it to consist in such small, inconsiderable, external things as they made the matter of their *Dissensions*. *Christianity* was not much concerned, whether they ate such kind of *Meats*, or whether they did not eat them; whether they kept *Sabbaths* and *New-Moons* holy to the Lord, or whether they esteemed every day alike. *That* was a more *inward*, and a more *noble* thing. It was the hearty practice of *Righteousness* and *Peace*, and *Rejoycing to do good*. These were the things that made a man a *Christian*; and *in These*

Ver. 18. *things* (saith the Apostle) *he that serveth Christ is indeed acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

And then at last from these several *Particulars* he draws this *general* Inference by way of *Exhortation*: *Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace.*

I have given you a brief account of the *Apostle*'s discourse in this *Chapter*; and I could heartily wish that I had no occasion to deal any further upon this Subject. Happy were it for *Christians*, if things were in that posture among them, that they were no further concerned in these Discourses of Scripture, than only to be instructed in the sense of them. But, alas, whoever understands any thing of the state of

Christianity,

Chriſtianity, now for theſe many Ages in the World, will eaſily ſee that no one Point of our *Religion* has been in all times more neceſſary to be daily preached, to be earneſtly preſſed, to be loudly ſounded in the ears of Chriſtians, than this of *Peace* and *Love*, and mutual ſufferance under their different *apprehenſions* of *Religion*.

It has fared (as one hath obſerved) with *Chriſtianity* in this matter, as it did with the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation of old. The *great* and *principal* Commandment which God gave the *Jews*, and which (as they themſelves teach) was the *Foundation* of all their *Law*, was to *worſhip* the *God* of *Iſrael*, and *Him* only to *ſerve*: yet ſuch was the ſottiſhneſs and perverſeneſs of that *People*, that *This* was the Commandment, that of all others they could never be obliged to keep; but they were continually running a whoring after the *Gods* of the *Nations*, notwithſtanding all the various ways and methods that God made uſe of to reclaim them from that ſin. What the *Worſhip* of *one God* was to the *Jews*, that *Peace* and *Love*, and *Unity* is to the *Chriſtians*, even the *grand* diſtinguiſhing *Law* and *Character* of their *Profeſſion*: and yet with *ſorrow*, and to our unſpeakable *confuſion* it may be ſpoken, There is no *Religion* that ever was known in the World hath given Birth to ſo many *Hereſies*, hath been intituled to ſo many needleſs Diſputes and Quarrels, hath been crumbled into ſo many *Sects* and *Parties*, hath been proſecuted by all the ſeveral *Pretenders* to it with ſo much heat and fury, and implacable animoſity, hath been made the occaſion of ſo much Tumult, War, and Bloodſhed, as this excellent, this innocent, and gall-leſs *Religion* of ours. *Mr.* Hales.

To go no further than our ſelves, and the poſture we ſtand in at this day; if ever any *Society* of *Chriſtians* could be obliged to live in Brotherly *Love and Communion* with one another, we certainly are the Men. For beſides the

engagements of our *Religion*, common to us with other *Christians*, we have all the external advantages which a wise and well-temper'd Settlement of *Church-affairs*, a mild and just *Government*, and excellent Laws can give to the promoting thereof.

Religion is established among us in as great *Purity* as ever perhaps it was since the *Apostles* times.

The *Government* we live under, is neither so *Lax* as to defeat its own ends, nor so *Severe* as to exercise Tyranny over our Consciences.

The *Terms* of our *Communion* are more large, and moderate, and easie to be submitted to by men of different *Persuasions*, than any other *Church-Society* that I know of doth allow at this day. And this is so acknowledged, that there is scarce any of the several disagreeing *Parties* among us, but next to their *own Church* would prefer *Ours* before all others.

The *Doctrines* that make up our publick *Confession* are expressed in such a *latitude*, that they have been, and are generally assented to, by most of the *Dissenters* from us. And that wherein *We* differ from others, is not our *adding* to the *Faith* new and questionable *Doctrines*, but our *rejecting*, or not *imposing* their *Innovations*.

Our *Publick Service* hath not a *Prayer* in it but what any Christian in the World may lawfully say *Amen* to.

Our *Ceremonies* are but *few*, and those very *decent*, and unquestionably of *Primitive Antiquity*.

The *Penalties* which the *Laws* inflict upon those that *separate* from our *Communion* are so easie, and so moderate, that methinks *Sober* men should be ashamed to call them *Persecutions*; and should rather sit down contentedly under them, than by endeavouring, or desiring any *Alteration*, endanger the bringing the *Church*, and possibly *themselves* into far greater inconveniences than those they now suffer.

In

In a word, ſo excellent is the temper of our preſent *Settlement*, that there is no *Church* in the World, with which men of differing *Perſuaſions* may more ſafely communicate; and under which, even *Diſſenters*, if they be peaceable, may live more happily than the *Church* of *England*.

But now, how do we demean our ſelves under this happy Conſtitution of affairs? What *Fruits* of the *Goſpel* of *Peace* do we yield ſuitable to theſe great external Advantages? One might rationally expect to ſee *Religion* in quite another *Face* among us, than it hath in other parts of the World; and that enjoying ſuch excellent means of *Peace* and *Unity* as we do, and eſpecially having ſufficiently experienced the Miſeries of *Diſcord*; there ſhould no ſuch thing as *Faction* or *Diviſion* be heard of among us, but that we ſhould All like *Brethren* Chriſtianly joyn together with our *Common Mother*, and in ſmaller matters *bear* with one anothers Weakneſſes, and Ignorances, and Miſtakes, as doubtleſs *God* himſelf will; and as the *Church*, which is principally concern'd, in many caſes doth.

But alas, the event doth too notoriouſly diſcover the contrary to all this, and that to the ſhame of our ſelves, and the reproach of our Church, and the ſcandal of Religion, and the rejoycing of our Enemies, and the grief of all good men.

Never were our *Differences* higher, our *Oppoſitions* one of another more violent, our *Schiſms* and *Separations* more numerous, and more obſtinate than they are at this day.

We diſpute eternally, we quarrel without grounds, and without meaſure; we ſtickle for every *Trifle*, and are as much concerned for the propagating a ſilly *Notion*, which might very well be let alone without our being a jot the worſe Chriſtians, as if the *Fundamentals* of our *Religion* lay at ſtake.

We revile, we reproach, we beſpatter one another; and

though we be extremely *ſcrupulous* in ſmaller matters, yet we make no *ſcruple* of ſacrificing *charity*, and the *Churches Peace* to every *humour*, and every *paſſion*. And whileſt we are zealous in the matter of an *Opinion*, or a ſmall Ceremony; we often loſe all ſenſe of Religion, and good Manners, and even Humanity it ſelf.

What the Conſequences of theſe unreaſonable and unchriſtian *Feuds* may be, we know not. I pray God they do not end, either in a very great *Corruption*, or a total *Subverſion* of *Chriſtianity* among us. It was theſe *ſins*, if it be lawful to gueſs at the reaſons of God's Judgments from outward Appearances, that brought deſolation upon thoſe once flouriſhing *Churches* of *Afric* and *Aſia*; and who knows, if they be obſtinately perſiſted in, but they may be an occaſion of *God's removing* his *Candleſtick* from us alſo.

And now is it not needful that every *Chriſtian* ſhould uſe his utmoſt endeavour to *ſtill* that *Spirit* of *Contention* that is gone forth among us? Is it not needful that every *Son of Peace* ſhould bring ſome *water* to the quenching of our *Flames*?

Let me therefore this day take up St. *Paul*'s exhortation to you; let me beſeech you, let me conjure you; *if there be any Conſolation in Chriſt, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowſhip of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies*, that now at length laying aſide all *bitterneſs* and *evil ſpeaking*, all *variance* and *emulation*, all needleſs Diſputes and Contentions, you would unanimouſly joyn together in *following after the things that make for peace*.

And that my *Exhortation* may be the more effectual to the purpoſes I intend it for, I ſhall purſue it; *Firſt*, by way of *Direction*; *Secondly*, by way of *Motive*. *Firſt*, I ſhall reduce the *Duty* here enjoyned of *following the things that make for peace* to its *particular Rules* and *Inſtances*, that you may know what is to be done by you in order to the performance of it.

Secondly,

Secondly, I ſhall ſet before you the very great *Engagements* and *Obligations* that lie upon us to *follow after the things that make for peace*; that you may be perſwaded the more vigorouſly to ſet about it.

And both theſe things I ſhall manage as near as I can, with reſpect to the preſent *ſtate* and *poſture* of *Affairs* among us, and withal ſhall always remember that my buſineſs is not to preſcribe *Laws* or *Rules* to my *Superiors* for their Carriage in theſe matters, but only to repreſent the Duty that Chriſtians of a *private capacity* do owe to the *Publick*, and to one another.

As for the *Firſt* thing, which is, to *direct* and *inſtruct* you in the performance of this Duty of *following the things that make for peace*, you may be pleaſed to take notice, That this Duty hath a twofold Object, according to the two different Relations and Capacities in which we are to be conſidered; to wit, the *Church* our *Mother*, and *particular Chriſtians* our *Brethren*. In the *firſt* Relation we are conſidered as *Subjects*; in the *ſecond* as *Fellow Chriſtians*. With reſpect to the *former*, the *Peace* we are to purſue implies *Obedience*, and *Preſervation of Communion*, in oppoſition to *Schiſm* and *Separation*. With reſpect to the *latter*, it implies mutual *Love* and *Charity*, in oppoſition to *Quarrels* and *Contentions*.

My buſineſs therefore upon this *firſt* head is to ſhew what are the *Particulars* of our *Duty*, what are the means that conduce to *Peace*, in both theſe reſpects.

And firſt of all, I begin with what is due from us to the *Church* in order to *Peace*, as *Peace* ſtands in contradiſtinction to *Schiſm*. And this Point I ſhall beg leave to diſcuſs very freely, and very particularly; becauſe I fear we have generally many falſe *Notions* about it; and yet it is a matter of ſuch conſequence, that I doubt not but the right underſtanding of it would go a great way to the *Cure* of the ſad *Diviſions* that are among us.

And

And that I may discourse with more clearness, and more evidence, I shall deliver what I have to say in this matter, by way of *Propositions*; taking my Rise from the *first Principle* of *Church-Society*, and so regularly ascending.

The *first Proposition* I lay down is this; *That every* Christian *upon the very account of his being so, is a* Member *of the* Church *of* Christ, *and is bound to joyn in* External Communion *with it where it can be had.*

For the clearing of this, you may be pleased to consider, that the primary Design and Intention of our Saviour in his undertaking for us, was not to save *particular persons* without respect to a *Society*, but to gather to himself a *Church* out of *Mankind*, to erect and form a *Body Politick*, of which himself was the *Head*, and particular Christians the *Members*: and in this method through *Obedience* to his *Laws* and *Government* to bring men to *Salvation*.

And this is no more than what is the Sense and Language of the *Holy Scriptures*; wherein whatever Christ is said to have *done* or *suffered* for *Mankind*, he is said to have done for them, not as *scattered Individuals*, but as *Incorporated* into a *Church*. Thus *Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it. Christ redeemed the Church with his own Blood. Christ is the Saviour of his Body*, that is to say, the *Church*, with many passages of the like importance.

Eph. 5. 25. Act. 20. 28. Eph. 5. 23.

The plain Consequence from hence is, that every person, so far as he is a *Christian*, so far he is a *Member* of the *Church*; and by virtue of that Relation to the *Church* it is, that he hath any Relation to *Christ*, or any Title to the *Priviledges* of the *Gospel*.

And agreeably to this Notion, it is very plain, that *Baptism*, which is by all acknowledged to be the *Ceremony* of Initiating us into *Christianity*, is in Scripture declared to be the *Rite* whereby we are entred and admitted into the *Church*.

Church. Thus St. *Paul* expreſly tells us, that *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body*. And again, that *Chriſt hath ſanctified*, that is to ſay, ſeparated *his Church by the waſhing of Water and the Word*. 1 *Cor.* 12, 13. *Eph.* 5, 26.

Now then it being thus evident, that every Chriſtian as a *Chriſtian*, is a Member of that *Body* of *Chriſt* which we call the *Church*: there will be little need of taking pains to prove, that every ſuch perſon is obliged to joyn in *External Communion* with the *Church* where he can do ſo: for the very nature of this *Church-membership* doth imply it. Without this, neither the *Ends* of *Church-Society*, nor the *Benefits* accruing to us therefrom can be attained.

Firſt, not the *Ends* of it: The Ends of Church-Society are the more *Solemn Worſhip* of God, and the publick Profeſſion of our *Religion*, and the mutual Edification one of another: Now, how theſe can be in any meaſure attained without aſſociating together in *publick Aſſemblies*, and *mutual Offices*, and other *Acts* of *External Communion* with one another, cannot any ways be imagined.

And as little in the ſecond place, can it be conceived how without this we can be made partakers of the Beneſits and Priviledges that *Chriſt* hath made over to the *Members* of his *Church*. For we are to conſider that God hath ſo ordered the matter, and without doubt for this very reaſon, to unite us the more firmly in *Society*, that the Priviledges of the *Goſpel*, ſuch as Pardon of Sin, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit, are not ordinarily conveyed to us ſo immediately by *God*, but that there muſt intervene the Miniſtry of *Men*. God's holy *Word* and *Sacraments* are the Chanels in which they are derived to us; and *thoſe* to whom he hath committed the Miniſtry of *Reconciliation* and the *Power* of the *Keys*, are the *Hands* that muſt diſpence them. We have no promiſe of *Spiritual Graces*, but by theſe means: ſo that in order to the partaking of them, there is an abſolute neceſſity laid upon

upon us of joyning and communicating with the *Church*.

It is true indeed, God doth not ſo tie himſelf up to theſe *means*, but that he can, and will in ſome caſes, confer the Benefits of them without them: as in caſe of a *General Apoſtaſie* of the *Church*; or of *Perſecution* for *Religion*; or of an unjuſt *Excommunication*, or any other caſe where Communion with a *true viſible Church* is denied to us. But though *God* doth act *extraordinarily* in *extraordinary* caſes, where theſe *means* cannot be had; yet this doth not at all diminiſh, much leſs take away the neceſſity of making uſe of *them* when they can be had.

From what hath been diſcourſed on this *firſt Propoſition*, we may by the way, gather theſe two things: I only name them. *Firſt*, How untrue their *Poſition* is that maintain, that all our Obligation to Church-Communion, doth ariſe from a voluntary admiſſion of our ſelves into ſome particular Congregation, and an explicit Promiſe or Ingagement to joyn with it in Church-Ordinances.

2. How wildly and extravagantly they diſcourſe that talk of a *Chriſtianity at large*, without relation to a Church, or Communion with any Society of *Chriſtians*.

The *ſecond Propoſition* is, *That every one is bound to joyn in* Communion *with the eſtabliſhed* National Church *to which he belongs, ſuppoſing there be nothing in the* Terms *of its* Communion *that renders it unlawful for him ſo to do.*

For if we are bound to maintain Communion with the Catholick Church, as I have before proved, it is plain, that we are bound to maintain Communion with that part of it, within whoſe Verge the Divine Providence has caſt us. For we cannot communicate with the Catholick Church, but by communicating with ſome Part of it: and there is no communicating with any Part of it, but that under which we live, or where we have our Reſidence.

Well, but it may be ſaid, that there may be ſeveral Diſtinct

ſtinct Churches in the place where we live. There may be the fixed Regular Aſſemblies of the National Church; and there may be ſeparate Congregations; both which are, or pretend to be *Parts* of the Catholick Church; ſo that it may be all one as to our communicating with *that*, which of *theſe* we joyn with, ſuppoſing we joyn but with one of them; and conſequently there is no neceſſity from *that* Principle, that we ſhould hold Communion with the *Publick Aſſemblies* of the *National Church*.

But as to this I deſire it may be conſidered, that That, that lays an Obligation upon us to joyn in Communion with the *Church* (to wit our being *Members* of that *one Body* of *Chriſt*) doth alſo lay an Obligation upon us, as much as in us lies to preſerve the *Unity* of *that Body*, (for this both the Fundamental *Laws* of *Society*, and the expreſs Precepts of *Chriſtianity* do require of every *Member*:) But now to make a *Rent* in, or *ſeparate* from any *Part* of the *Body* of *Chriſt*, with which we may lawfully communicate (and ſuch we now ſuppoſe the *eſtabliſhed Aſſemblies* of the *Nation* to be) is directly contrary to the preſerving the *Unity* of *that Body*: And therefore certainly ſuch a *Rent* or *Separation* muſt be unlawful. And if ſo, then it muſt be unlawful alſo to joyn with any Congregation of men among us that have made ſuch a *Rent* or *Separation*.

So that, let our pretences be what they will, ſo long as the *fixed Regular Aſſemblies* of the *Nation* wherein we live, do truly belong to the *Catholick Church*, and we can lawfully joyn with them, it is certain we are bound ſo to do, and not to joyn with thoſe *Congregations* that have withdrawn themſelves from *them*; for to do this, would be to joyn in *Society* with *Separatiſts*, would be a partaking of their *Sin*, and a breach of the *Apoſtle's* Precept of *Avoiding thoſe that cauſe Diviſions*. Rom. 16. 17.

The *third Propoſition* is, *That the being a* Member *of any*

Church, *doth oblige a man to ſubmit to all the* Laws *and* Conſtitutions *of that* Church.

This Propoſition is in the general ſo unqueſtionable, that no *ſober* man will deny it. And indeed, it is the *Baſis* upon which all *Societies* are founded, and by which they do ſubſiſt. For to ſuppoſe a *Society*, and yet to ſuppoſe the *Members* of it not under an Obligation to obey its Laws and Government, is to make Ropes of Sand, to ſuppoſe a *Body* without *Sinews* and *Ligaments* to hold its parts together.

So that all the queſtion here, is concerning the nature and extent of the *Churches* Power over her *Members*, how far, and in what inſtances ſhe hath *Authority* to oblige them. Which is a queſtion not difficult to be anſwered, if men would come to it without paſſion and prejudice.

For it muſt be acknowledged, in the firſt place, that the *Church* muſt, as all other *Societies*, be entruſted with at leaſt ſo much *power* over her *Subjects*, as is neceſſary for the ſecuring her own *Welfare* and *Preſervation:* For to think otherwiſe, is to ſuppoſe *God* to have founded a *Church*, and intended the *Well-being* and *Continuance* of it; which are things that every one muſt grant: And yet to ſuppoſe that he hath denied her the uſe of the *Means* without which that *Well-being* and *Continuance* cannot be attained; which is monſtrous and contradictious.

Furthermore it muſt be granted, that the *Welfare* and *Preſervation* of the *Church* cannot be ſecured but upon theſe two Suppoſitions. *Firſt*, That Proviſion be made for the *due* and *orderly* performance of the *Worſhip* of *God*. *Secondly*, That there be means of maintaining *Peace* and *Unity* among its *Members*. This latter is neceſſary to the *Welfare* and *Preſervation* of a *Church*, as a *Society*, the former is neceſſary to it as a *Religious Society*.

Now then this being admitted, it follows in the general, that whatever *Power* over her *Subjects* is neceſſary in order

to

to either of theſe things, all that at leaſt muſt be ſuppoſed to be lodged in the *Church*, that is to ſay, in *Thoſe* that have the *Government* of it.

So that from hence it is plain, in the *firſt* place, that the *Church* hath power ſo far to reſtrain the exerciſe of her *Subjects Liberty*, as to oblige them to all ſuch Laws, Rules, Orders, and Ceremonies as She ſhall eſtabliſh for the more Solemn, Regular, Decent, and convenient Adminiſtration of *Religious Affairs*. And if it be queſtioned whether her *Appointments* do indeed conduce to that end, of that She her ſelf is to be the *Judge*; Her Members being no farther concerned therein, than only before they obey her *Impoſitions* to ſee that they be not repugnant to the known *Laws* of *God*. This Power the *Church* muſt be ſuppoſed to have, otherwiſe She will not be enabled to make Proviſion for the firſt thing whereon her *Welfare* doth depend, *viz.* the Performance of God's Worſhip and Service in a *due* and *orderly* manner.

Secondly, From hence alſo it is plain, that the *Church* muſt be furniſhed with a Power to *end* and *determine* Controverſies of *Religion* that ariſe among its *Members*: that is to ſay, to give ſuch an *Authoritative* deciſion of them, as that all *Parties* are bound to acquieſce in it: for without this ſhe would be defective in the *ſecond* thing required to her *Welfare* and *Preſervation*, *viz.* maintaining her ſelf in *Peace* and *Unity*.

But here it may be taken notice, that this Power of *ending Controverſies*, which we aſcribe to the *Church*, doth not imply any *Authority* over our *Judgments*; or that in vertue thereof ſhe can oblige us to give an *inward aſſent* to her *Determinations*, any further than ſhe gives us evidence for the *Truth* of them: (which is that extravagant Power the *Church* of *Rome* doth challenge to her ſelf) but only an *Authority* over our *Practices*, that ſhe can oblige us to ſubmit

ſo far to her *Definitions*, as not to *act* any thing contrary to them. A Power in the *former ſenſe* is not neceſſary to the *Churches Peace*; and the reaſon is, becauſe our *Judgments* and *Opinions*, ſo long as we keep them to our ſelves, cannot poſſibly cauſe any diſturbance in, or do any injury to *Society*. But a Power in the *latter ſenſe* is abſolutely neceſſary; for if men may be allowed to vent and publiſh what ever *fancies* come into their heads, and the *Church* have no *Authority* to impoſe ſilence upon them, it cannot be avoided but ſhe will be over-run with *Hereſies*, and embroiled in infinite *Quarrels* and *Controverſies*, to the deſtruction of her publick Peace.

The *fourth Propoſition* is, *That we can have no juſt cauſe of withdrawing our* Communion *from the* Church *whereof we are* Members, *but when we cannot communicate with it without the* Commiſſion *of a* Sin.

For if we are bound to Communicate with the *Church* when we can lawfully do ſo, as hath been before proved; it is plain we are bound ſo long to *continue* our Communion with the *Church*, till it be unlawful to continue in it any longer: But it cannot be unlawful to continue in her Communion, till ſhe require ſomething as a Condition of her Communion that is a *Sin*.

So that there are but *Two* caſes, wherein it can be lawful to *withdraw* our *Communion* from a *Church*, becauſe there are but two caſes wherein *Communion* with her can be *ſinful*. One is, when the *Church* requires of us as a *Condition* of her *Communion*, an *Acknowledgement* and *Profeſſion* of that for a *Truth*, which we know to be an *Error*. The other is, when the *Church* requires of us as a Condition of her Communion, the joyning with her in ſome Practices, which we know to be againſt the *Laws* of *God*. In theſe two Caſes to withdraw our Obedience to the *Church* is ſo far from being a *Sin*, that it is a neceſſary *Duty*; becauſe we have an obligation

gation to the *Laws* of God antecedent to that we have to *thoſe* of the *Church*; and we are bound to obey *theſe* no further than they are conſonant or agreeable to *thoſe*.

But now from this diſcourſe it will appear how inſufficient thoſe Cauſes, how unwarrantable thoſe Grounds are, upon which many among us have proceeded to *Separation* from our *Church*.

For, *firſt*, If what I have laid down be true, it cannot be true that *unſcriptural Impoſitions* can be a warrantable cauſe of *ſeparation* from a *Church*; ſuppoſing that by *Unſcriptural* be meant no more than only what is neither *Commanded* nor *Forbid* in the Sciptures. For the Actions required by theſe *Unſcriptural Impoſitions*, are either in themſelves *lawful* to be done, or *not lawful* to be done. If they be in themſelves *unlawful* to be done, then they do not fall under that notion of *Unſcriptural* we here ſpeak of; they are downright *Sins*, and ſo either *particularly* or in the *general*, forbid in the *Scripture*. If they be in themſelves *lawful* to be done, then it cannot be imagined how their being *commanded* can make them *unlawful*: So that in this caſe, there is no *Sin* in yielding obedience to the *Church*, and conſequently no cauſe of withdrawing our Communion from it.

Nor *ſecondly* can it be true, that the Church requiring from us any *doubtful* or *ſuſpected* practices as Conditions of her Communion, is a juſt cauſe of *Separation*: for we muſt have at leaſt as much certainty of the *unlawfulneſs* of the *actions* enjoyned, as we have of our *Obligation* to the *Authority* that enjoyns them, before we withdraw our *Obedience* to it, otherwiſe we do not proceed upon ſafe grounds; but now we are *abſolutely certain*, that God hath commanded us to obey them that have the rule over us, but we are not *certain* that the *actions* we here ſpeak of, are any where *forbid* by him; for if we were, they would be no longer *doubtful* or *ſuſpected*, they would be *certain Sins*: ſo that if we will follow

low the ſurer ſide, as all Chriſtians in theſe caſes are bound to do, we muſt continue our *Obedience* to the *Church*, notwithſtanding we *ſuſpect* or *doubt* the lawfulneſs of her Commands.

Neither *thirdly* can it be true, that *Errours* in a *Church* as to matter of *Doctrines*, or *Corruptions* as to matter of *Practice*, ſo long as thoſe *Errours* and *Corruptions* are only *ſuffered*, but not *impoſed*, can be a ſufficient cauſe of *Separation*; the reaſon is, becauſe theſe things are not *Sins* in us, ſo long as we do not joyn with the *Church* in them. So that ſo long as we can Communicate with a *Church*, without either profeſſing her *Errours*, or partaking in her *ſinful Practices*, as in the preſent caſe it is ſuppoſed we may do; ſo long we are bound upon the *Principle* before laid down not to *ſeparate* from her.

Neither in the *fourth* and laſt place, is the enjoying a more profitable *Miniſtry*, or living under a more pure *Diſcipline* in another *Church*, a juſt cauſe of forſaking the *Communion* of that whereof we are now *Members*. The reaſon is, becauſe we are not to commit the leaſt *crime* for the attaining the greateſt good in the World: Now it is a *crime* to forſake the *Communion* of the *Church* whereof we are *Members*, ſo long as her *Communion* is not *ſinful*: But the enjoyment of a *leſs profitable Miniſtry*, or a *leſs pure Diſcipline* doth not make her *Communion ſinful*; therefore the enjoyment of a *more profitable Miniſtry*, or a *more pure Diſcipline*, cannot make a *Separation* from her *lawful*.

The *fifth* and laſt *Propoſition* is, *That though we have a juſt cauſe to refuſe Communion with the* Church *whereof we are* Members *in ſome inſtances, yet we are not therefore to proceed to ſo* total *a* Separation *from it as to erect* New Churches *in contradiſtinction to it, or to joyn with thoſe that do.*

The reaſon is clear from the foregoing Principles, *viz.* becauſe we are bound to *obey* as far as we can, and where we cannot,

cannot, to *ſuffer*; but at no hand to diſturb the *Peace*, or break the *Unity* of the *Church*.

Though we cannot comply with all that the *Church* requires of us, yet ſtill we muſt joyn with *Her* in thoſe other things where we lawfully can.

Nay, though the *Church* ſhould require thoſe things as *Conditions* of her *Communion* ſo that unleſs we conform to them, we cannot at all communicate with her; yet ſtill there is a *Paſſive Obedience* due from us: We muſt ſit ſtill and ſuffer, and not make a Rent in the *Church* by ſetting up one *Altar* againſt another.

This is like the ſetting up a new and a diſtinct *Government* in the Bowels of the *State*.

Nothing can juſtify ſuch a degree of departure as this, but only one thing; to wit, ſo great and general a *Corruption* of the *Church*, both in *Doctrine* and *Practice*, that the *Salvation* of all that communicate with her, is thereby endangered: Which though it be the condition of the *Members* of the preſent *Church* of *Rome*, yet I dare ſay, few among us will affirm to be the caſe of them that communicate with the *Church* of *England*.

Thus have I as briefly as I could repreſented to you the Particulars of that Duty we owe to our *common Mother*, in the *preſervation* of her *Unity* and *Communion*. And I hope, I have not been ſo zealous for *Peace* as to have been at all injurious to *Truth*.

I am confident I have ſaid nothing but what is very agreeable to *Scripture* and *Reaſon*, and the ſenſe of the Beſt and Ancienteſt *Chriſtians*. And I am certain, I have not intrenched upon any of thoſe Grounds upon which our *Anceſtors* proceeded to the *Reformation* of *Religion* among us. And for moſt of the things here delivered, we have alſo the *ſuffrage* of ſeveral, and thoſe the moſt learned and moderate of our *diſſenting Brethren*.

And

And now if after this any one be offended, as indeed these kind of discourses are seldom very acceptable; all I can say, is this, That the *Truths* here delivered, are really of so great importance to *Religion* and the *publick Peace*, that they ought not to be dissembled or suppressed, for any *bad reception* they may meet with from *some men*: but as for the *manner* of delivering them, I have taken all the care I could, not to give offence to any.

I now pass on to the *second* part of my *Task* upon this *Head*, which is to consider the *Duty* recommended in the *Text*, with relation to *particular Christians* our *Brethren*.

And here my business is to direct you to the *Pursuit* of *those things that make for Peace*; as *Peace* signifies mutual *Love* and *Charity* in opposition to *Strife* and *Bitterness* and *Contentions*.

The things that make for *Peace*, in this sense, are more especially these that follow, which I shall deliver by way of *Rules* and *Advices*.

The *first Rule* is to distinguish carefully between matters of *Faith*, and matters of *Opinion*; and as to these latter, to be willing that every one should enjoy the liberty of judging for himself.

This is one thing that would help very much to the extinguishing of those unnatural *Heats* and *Animosities*, which have long been the Reproach of Christians. If men would set no greater value upon their *Notions* and *Opinions* than they do deserve; if they would make a difference between *necessary* points, and those that are not so: and in those things that are not *necessary*, would not rigorously tie up others to their measures, but would allow every man to abound in his own sense, so long as the *Churches Peace* is not hereby injured, we should not have so many bitter Quarrels and Heart-burnings among us. But alas, whilest every one will frame a *System* of *Divinity* of his own head,

and

and every puny *Notion* of that *Syſteme*, muſt be *Chriſtn'd* by the name of an *Article* of *Faith*; and every man that doth not believe juſt as he doth, muſt ſtraight be a *Heretick* for not doing ſo: How can it be expected but we muſt wrangle eternally?

It were heartily to be wiſhed, that Chriſtians would conſider, that the *Articles* of *Faith*, thoſe things that God hath made neceſſary by every one to be believed in order to his *Salvation*, are but very *few*, and they are all of them ſo *plainly* and *clearly* ſet down in the *Scripture*, that it is impoſſible for any ſincere honeſt-minded man to miſs of the *true ſenſe* of them. And they have further this Badge to diſtinguiſh them from all other *Truths*, that they have an immediate influence upon mens *Lives*, a direct Tendency to make men *Better*; whereas moſt of thoſe things that make the matter of our Controverſies, and about which we make ſuch a noiſe and clamour, and for which we ſo bitterly cenſure and anathematize one another, are quite of another nature: They are neither ſo *clearly revealed* or *propounded* in the Scripture, but that even good men through the great difference of their Parts, Learning and Education, may after their beſt endeavours vary in their ſentiments about them. Nor do they at all concern a *Chriſtian Life*, but are matters of pure *notion* and *ſpeculation*. So that it cannot with any reaſon be pretended that they are *points* upon which Mens *Salvation* doth depend. It cannot be thought that *God* will be offended with any man for his *Ignorance* or *Miſtakes* concerning them. And, if not, if a man may be a *Good Chriſtian*, and go to Heaven whether he holds the right or the wrong ſide in theſe matters; for God's ſake, Why ſhould we be *angry* with any one for having other Opinions about them than we have? Why ſhould we not rather permit men to uſe their *Underſtandings* as well as they can, and where they fail of the *Truth*, to bear with them, as *God* himſelf without

queſtion will; than by ſtickling for every impertinent unneceſſary *Truth*, deſtroy that *Peace*, and *Love*, and *Amity* that ought to be among *Chriſtians*.

The *ſecond* thing I would recommend, is a great *ſimplicity* and *purity* of *Intention* in the purſuit of *Truth*; and at no hand to let *paſſion* or *intereſt*, or any *ſelf-end* be ingredient into our *Religion*.

The practice of this, would not more conduce to the diſcovery of *Truth*, than it would to the promoting of *Peace*. For it is eaſie to obſerve, that it is not always a pure concernment for the Truth, in the points in Controverſie, that makes us ſo zealous, ſo fierce, and ſo obſtinate in our Diſputes for, or againſt them; but ſomething of which that is only the *Mask* and *Pretence*, ſome *By-ends* that muſt be ſerved, ſome *Secular Intereſt* that we have eſpouſed, which muſt be carried on.

We have either engaged our ſelves to ſome *Party*, and ſo its Intereſts right or wrong muſt be promoted: or we have taken up an opinion inconſiderately at the firſt, and appeared in the favour of it, and afterward our own credit doth oblige us to defend it: or we have received ſome *ſlight* or *diſappointment* from the Men of *one way*, and ſo in pure pet and revenge, we paſs over to their Adverſaries. Or it is for our gain and advantage, that the Differences among us be ſtill kept afoot; or we deſire to get our ſelves a name by ſome great *Atchievments* in the Noble *Science* of *Controverſies*; or we are poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of Contradiction; or we delight in Novelties; or we love to be ſingular.

Theſe are the things that too often both give birth to our Controverſies and alſo nouriſh and foment them.

If we would but caſt theſe *Beams* out of our eyes, we ſhould both ſee more *clearly*, and certainly live more *peaceably*. But whileſt we purſue *baſe* and *ſordid ends* under the pretence of maintaining *Truth*, we ſhall always be in *error*, and always in *contention*.

Let

Let us therefore quit our ſelves of all our pre-poſſeſſions; let us mortify all our *Pride* and *Vain-glory*, our *Paſſion* and *Emulation*, our *Covetouſneſs* and *Revenge*; and bring nothing in the world to our *Debates* about Religion, but only the *pure love* of *Truth*: and then our Controverſies will not be ſo long; and they will be more calmly and peaceably managed, and they will redound to the greater good of all *Parties*.

And this I dare ſay further to encourage you to labour after this temper of mind, That he that comes thus qualified to the ſtudy of *Religion*, though he may not have the luck always to light on the *Truth*, yet with all his *errors*, be they what they will, he is more acceptable to God, than the Man that hath *Truth* on his ſide, yet takes it up or maintains it to ſerve a turn. He that believes a *Falſehood*, after he hath uſed his ſincere endeavours to find the *Truth*, is not half ſo much a *Heretick*, as he that profeſſeth a *Truth* out of *evil Principles*, and proſtituteth it to *unworthy ends*.

The third Rule is, Never to quarrel about *Words* and *Phraſes*, but ſo long as other men mean much what the ſame that we do, let us be content though they have not the luck to expreſs themſelves ſo well.

I do not know how it comes to paſs, whether through too much heat and eagerneſs of diſputing, that we do not mind one anothers *Senſe*; or, whether through too much love to our own manner of *Thinking* or *Speaking*, that we will not endure any thing but what is conveyed to us in our own *Methods*: But, really, it often happens that moſt bitter Quarrels do commence, not ſo much from the different *Senſe* of the contending Parties, concerning the things they contend about, as from their different *Terms* expreſſing the ſame *Senſe*, and the different *Grounds* they proceed upon, or *Arguments* they make uſe of for the proof of it.

For my part, I verily believe that this is the Case of several of those *Disputes*, in which we *Protestants* do often engage at this day. I do not think, in many points, our *Differences* are near so wide as they are sometimes represented, but that they might easily be made up with a little allowance to mens *Words* and *Phrases*, and the different *Methods* of deducing their Notions.

It would be perhaps no hard matter to make this appear in those *Controversies* that are so much agitated among us concerning *Faith* and *Justification*, and the *necessity of good works to Salvation*, and *Imputed Righteousness*, and the *difference between Virtue and Grace*; with some others, if this were a fit place for it. The difference that is among us as to these Points, is possibly not much greater than this, that some men in these matters speak more clearly and fully; others more imperfectly and obscurely. Some men convey their sense in plain and proper words; others delight in *Metaphors*, and do perhaps too far extend the *Figurative* expressions of *Scripture*: Some reason more closely and upon more certain *Principles*; others possibly may proceed upon weaker grounds, and *misapply Texts* of Scripture, and discourse more loosely. But both *Parties* (especially the more moderate of both) seem to drive at much what the same thing, though by different ways, as appears from this, that being interrogated concerning the *Consequences* of their several *Opinions*, they generally agree in admitting or *rejecting* the same.

But *fourthly*, another thing that would make for peace is this; never to charge upon men the *Consequences* of their *Opinions* when they expresly disown them.

This is another thing that doth hugely tend to widen our Differences, and to exasperate mens spirits one against another; when having examined some *Opinion* of a *Man*, or *Party* of *Men*, and finding very great *absurdities* and evil *consequences*

ſequences neceſſarily to flow from it, we preſently throw all thoſe into the *diſh* of them that hold the *Opinion*, as if they could not own the *one*, but they muſt neceſſarily own the *other*: whereas indeed, the men we thus charge, may be ſo innocent in this matter, that they do not in the leaſt dream of ſuch *Conſequences*; or if they did, they would be ſo far from *owning* them, that they would abhor the *Opinion* for their ſakes.

To give you an inſtance or two in this matter: It is a Doctrine maintained by ſome, That *God's Will is the Rule of Juſtice*; or that *every thing is therefore juſt or good, becauſe God wills it*. Thoſe that are concerned to oppoſe this Doctrine, do contend that if this *Doctrine* be true, it will neceſſarily follow, that no man can have any certainty of the *Truth* of any one *Propoſition* that God hath revealed in Scripture. Granting now that this can by juſt conſequence be made out, yet I dare ſay, thoſe that hold the aforeſaid *Doctrine* would be very angry, and had good reaſon ſo to be, if they were told that they did not, no, nor could not, upon their *Principles* certainly believe the *Scripture*.

Some Men think that they can with demonſtrative evidence make out, that the *Doctrine* of *God's irreſpective Decrees*, doth in its Conſequences overthrow the whole *Goſpel*, that it doth deſtroy the nature of *Rewards* and *Puniſhments*, cuts the very *Sinews* of mens endeavours after virtue; makes all *Laws*, *Promiſes*, *Exhortations* perfectly idle and inſignificant things; and renders God the moſt *unlovely Being* in the world. Now ſuppoſing all this to be true, yet it would be a moſt unjuſt and uncharitable thing to affirm of any that believe that Doctrine (many of whom are certainly pious and good men) that they do maintain any ſuch impious and blaſphemous Opinions as thoſe that are now mentioned.

The ſum of all is, that a man may believe a *Propoſition*, and not believe all that follows from it: not, but that all the

the *deductions* from a *Propoſition* are equally true, and equally credible with the *Propoſition* from whence they are deduced: But a man may not ſo clearly ſee through the *Propoſition* as to diſcern that ſuch *Conſequences* are really deducible from it: So that we are at no hand to charge them upon him, unleſs he do explicitly own them.

If this Rule was obſerved, our Differences would not make ſo great a noiſe, nor would the *Errors* and *Heterodoxies* maintained among us appear ſo monſtrous and extravagant; and we ſhould ſpare a great many hard words and odious appellations, which we now too prodigally beſtow upon thoſe that differ from us.

The *fifth* Rule is, to abſtract mens *Perſons* from their *Opinions*; and in examining or oppoſing *theſe*, never to make any reflections upon *thoſe*.

This is a thing ſo highly reaſonable, that methinks no pretender to ingenuity ſhould ever need to be called upon to obſerve it. For it ſeems very abſurd and ridiculous in any *Argument* to meddle with that, that nothing concerns the *Queſtion*. But what do *Perſonal Reflections* concern the *Cauſe* of *Religion*? what ever it may be to the *Reputation* of an *Opinion*, I am ſure it is nothing to the *Truth* of it, that ſuch or ſuch a man holds it.

And truly, if men would leave this impertinence, we might hope for a better iſſue of our *Religious Debates*: but whileſt men will forſake the *Merits* of the *Cauſe*, and unmanly fall to railing, and diſparaging Mens *Perſons*, and ſcraping together all the ill that can be ſaid of them, they blow the Coals of Contention, they ſo imbitter and envenom the Diſpute, that it rankles into incurable diſtaſts and heart-burnings.

Chriſtians would do well to conſider, that theſe mean arts of expoſing Mens *Perſons* to diſcredit their *Opinions*, are very much unworthy the *Dignity* of their *Profeſſion*, and

and moſt of all miſ-becoming the *Sacredneſs* and *Venerableneſs* of the *Truth* they contend for. And beſides, no Cauſe ſtands in need of them, but ſuch an one as is extremely baffled and deſperate; and even then they are the worſt Arguments in the world to ſupport it: For quick-ſighted men will eaſily ſee through the Duſt we endeavour to raiſe; and thoſe that are duller will be apt to ſuſpect from our being ſo angry and ſo waſpiſh, that we have but a bad matter to manage.

We ſhould conſider that Mens *Perſons* are *Sacred* things, that whatever power we have to judge of their *Opinions*, we have no authority to judge or cenſure *Them*. That to bring *Them* upon the Stage, and there throw dirt on them, is highly rude and uncivil, and an affront to *Human Society*, and the moſt contrary thing in the world to *Chriſtian Charity*, which is ſo far from enduring Reproaches and evil Speaking, that it obliges us to cover as much as we can all the *Faults*, and even the very *Indiſcretions* of others.

The *ſixth* and laſt thing I ſhall recommend to you as an Expedient of *Peace*, is a vigorous purſuit of *Holineſs*.

Do but ſeriouſly ſet your ſelves to be *good*: Do but get your *Hearts* deeply affected with Religion as well as your *Heads*, and then there is no fear but you will be all the *Sons of Peace*.

We may talk what we will; but really it is our not *Practiſing* our *Religion* that makes us ſo *Contentious* and *Diſputatious* about it. It is our *Emptineſs* of the *Divine Life*, that makes us ſo *full* of Speculation and Controverſie: was but *That* once firmly rooted in us, theſe *Weeds* and *Excreſcencies* of *Religion* would preſently dry up and wither; we ſhould loath any longer to feed upon ſuch *Huſks*, after we once came to have a Reliſh of that *Bread*.

Ah! how little ſatisfaction can all our pretty *Notions* and fine-ſpun *Controverſies* yield to a Soul that truly hungers

gers and thirſts after Righteouſneſs? How pitifully, flatly and inſipidly will they taſte, in compariſon of the Divine entertainments of the *Spiritual* Life.

Were we but ſeriouſly taken up with the *Subſtantials* of our *Religion*, we ſhould not have leiſure for the *Talking Diſputing Divinity*; we ſhould have greater matters to take up our thoughts, and more profitable Arguments to furniſh out our Diſcourſes. So long as we could buſy our ſelves in working out our *Salvation*, and furthering the *Salvation* of others, we ſhould think it but a mean Employment to ſpend our time in ſpinning *fine Nets* for the catching of *Flies*.

Beſides this *Divine Life*, if it once took place in us, would ſtrangely dilate and enlarge our hearts in *Charity* towards our *Brethren*; it would make us open our arms wide to the whole Creation; it would perfectly work out of us all that Peeviſhneſs and Sowrneſs, and Penuriouſneſs of ſpirit, which we do too often contract by being addicted to a *Sect*, and would make us Sweet and Benign, and Obliging, and ready to receive and embrace all Conditions of men. In a word, it would quite ſwallow up all *Diſtinctions* of *Parties*; and what ever did but bear upon it the *Image* of *God* and the *Superſcription* of the Holy *Jeſus*, would need no other Commendatories to our Affection, but would upon that alone account be infinitely dear and precious to us.

Let us all therefore earneſtly contend after this Divine Principle of *Holineſs*; let us bring down *Religion* from our *Heads* to our *Hearts*; from Speculation to Practice: Let us make it our buſineſs heartily to love God and do his will, and then we may hope to ſee *Peace* in our days.

This, this is that that will reſtore to the World the Golden Age of *Primitive Chriſtianity*, when the *Love* and *Unity* of the Diſciples of Jeſus was ſo conſpicuous and remarkable, that it became into a *Proverb*, *See how the Chriſtians love one another*. This, this is that that will bring in the Accompliſhment

pliſhment of all thoſe glorious *Promiſes* of *Peace* and *Tranquillity* that *Chriſt* hath made to his *Church*: Then ſhall the *Wolf* dwell with the *Lamb*, and the *Leopard* lie down with the *Kid*: Then ſhall not *Ephraim* envy *Judah*, nor *Judah* vex *Ephraim*; but we ſhall turn our *Swords* into *Ploughſhares*, and our *Spears* into *Pruning-hooks*; and there will be no more conſuming or devouring in all God's Holy Mountain.

I ſhould now proceed to the ſecond general Point in my propoſed Method of handling this Text, *viz.* To ſet before you the very great *Engagements* and *Obligations* we have upon us to follow after the Things that make for Peace; and that,

1. From the *Nature* and *Contrivance* of our *Religion.*
2. From the great weight the *Scripture* lays upon this *Duty.*
3. From the great *Unreaſonableneſs* of our Religious *Differences.*
4. From the very evil *Conſequences* that attend them; as 1. In that they are great Hinderances of a good Life. 2. They are very pernicious to the *Civil Peace* of the *State.* 3. They are highly Opprobrious to Chriſtianity in general. And 4. and laſtly, Very dangerous to the *Proteſtant Religion*, as giving too many advantages, and too much encouragement to the *Factors* of the *Papacy.*

But I have I fear already exceeded the Limits of a *Sermon*, and therefore ſhall add no more.

God open our Eyes, that we may in this our day underſtand the Things *that belong to* Peace, *before they be hid from our Eyes.*

FINIS.

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